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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001599

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SUBJECT: DPP CHAIR TSAI ING-WEN FEARS MORE VIOLENCE IF
PRESIDENT MA CONTINUES TO IGNORE HER PARTY'S VIEWS

REF: TAIPEI 1569

Classified By:
AIT Director Stephen M. Young,
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d)

Corrected Text - Para 6.

11. (C) Summary: A visibly tense Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chair Tsai Ing-wen told the Director on November 10 that she was decidedly downbeat about the future of Taiwan democracy. Claiming that President Ma Ying-jeou wasn't really in charge of his party (the KMT), Tsai predicted more protests and even possible bloodshed if the KMT doesn't pay closer heed to the views of Taiwan's opposition on crucial issues like sovereignty and balanced democratic development. Tsai said she was not in any hurry to agree to a meeting with Ma, as is increasingly being put forward by the Presidential Office. She argued that without a better sense that Ma can deliver on his promises, it might be better to hold out for a broader dialogue involving all the key players on both sides of the political spectrum. As she has done in the media these past several days, Tsai was studious in rejecting responsibility for the violence that occurred last Thursday during the visit of Chen Yunlin (Nov. 6), instead, blaming Ma and the police for the limited incidents that occurred. End summary.

12. (C) Tsai said she hoped the protests against President Ma and PRC Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Chen Yunlin's visit showed China and the world that there are people in Taiwan who deeply object to Ma and his cross-Strait policy. Tsai defended the DPP's efforts to control the protest and keep it peaceful, asserting that only a limited group of 20 to 30 people were involved in violence with police (see reftel). She said the DPP directed the crowds not to march from the original rally point toward the Grand Hotel where Chen was staying and even used a truck to try to block demonstrators. Tsai also dispatched the party's secretary-general and a lawyer to warn the demonstrators and ask them to disperse. According to Tsai, some DPP figures who were at the protest scene near the Grand Hotel helped calm the demonstrators.

13. (C) Tsai did not repeat her earlier public allegations that gangsters had instigated the violence at the protests. Instead, she blamed Ma for poorly handling the situation and the police for not protecting ordinary people. Tsai said the

last-minute change of time for the meeting between Ma and Chen "irritated" people and spurred a much larger turnout than anticipated. Tsai claimed 100,000 participants joined the daytime rally to protest the Ma-Chen meeting, contrary to police estimates of 30,000 people. She explained that police are usually interspersed in the crowds during demonstrations but this time the KMT government did not send any police to help monitor the rally. Instead, the police were all at the front of the rally, forming lines to block protesters. (Note: Poloff only saw one uniformed policeman among the demonstrators on November 6 in contrast to rallies on November 3 and October 25 when police stood around and walked among the crowds.)

Finding A Suitable Mechanism For Dialogue With Ma

14. (C) Acknowledging the media's fixation on a possible Tsai-Ma dialogue following the protests, Tsai doubted discussions could improve the situation without any changes in Ma's ability to control the KMT's "messy" party politics. In addition to competing with other KMT leaders, Ma is also vulnerable to Beijing's United Front tactics, Tsai suggested. In Tsai's view, former Vice President Lien Chan was Beijing's, not Ma's, choice to serve as Taiwan's representative to APEC this year.

15. (C) Nonetheless, Tsai did not discard the idea of dialogue but maintained discussions should involve the greater opposition as a whole and not just the DPP. The party is examining how to develop a mechanism for dialogue

TAIPEI 00001599 002 OF 002

between the opposition and the KMT administration and will talk to the Taiwan Solidarity Union among others to gauge interest. Tsai suggested the Ma administration should do its "homework" as well. Tsai added that she is in no rush to meet Ma and needs to obtain consensus within her party on the dialogue idea. Some within the DPP believe it is useless to engage Ma, and there are those who deem protests the best way to bring about change.

More DPP Detentions Likely

16. (C) While putting up a front of trying to work things out with the DPP, the KMT is actually attempting to weaken the DPP's chances in next year's local elections by taking unreasonable judicial action against several DPP local leaders, Tsai maintained. Drawing from her legal background, Tsai argued that the authorities could only detain suspects before trial if they were a flight risk or might collude with witnesses and co-defendants. These reasons did not apply to Yunlin County Magistrate Su Chih-fen who was detained on November 5. Tsai claimed the KMT has a list of DPP leaders against whom it plans take judiciary action. She believed the next leader to be targeted may be Tainan Mayor Hsu Tien-tsai. However, Tsai predicted, KMT plans will backfire if the party continues down this route.

Resigned to Protest

17. (C) Tsai alluded to her moderate temperament and stressed she did not like violence. However, she feared violence would be "inevitable" and it could get "very bloody" if Ma does not revise his cross-Strait policy and if he continues to curb the people's legal rights and the freedom of speech and expression. Police efforts to coddle Chen Yunlin and thwart protesters signaled that Taiwan's democracy is in jeopardy.

Comment

18. (C) In contrast to previous meetings where Tsai seemed

upbeat and confident in her ability to control the DPP, this time she acknowledged the differences between herself and some other party leaders. Visibly tense, Tsai appeared to be under pressure from hardliners within her party to remain tough.

SYOUNG